

St. Mary of the woods

DIORAMA - MEMORIAL

to

Mother Theodore Guerin
Foundress

Marywood Central High School
Anaheim, California

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Centenary Edition

MEMORIAL
to
Mother Theodore Guerin

American Foundress
and
First Superior-General
of
THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE
SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS,
INDIANA

TWELVE DIORAMAS

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana--1940



MOTHER THEODORE GUERIN

DIORAMA-MEMORIAL TO MOTHER THEODORE

THIS exhibit, originally planned as a permanent memorial to Mother Theodore, tells in concrete detail the story of the birth, growth, and development of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence, of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana.

- As the origin of the word suggests, the DIORAMA surely does allow us to "see through" the years. Its magic carries us back to the cradle of the community in France, through its early French development, across the ocean to America and the woods of Indiana, and on through the years of pioneer stress and achievement, down to "yesterday."
- The series is to remain as an integral part of the Museum, one of the three divisions of the Community Historical Section.
- The original planning, organization, and research,—extending over nine years, has been done by Sister Ignatia, S.P., Director of the Museum, who has also supervised the execution of her plan. The first diorama was made and donated by Henri Marchand of the Marchand Diorama Corporation a few years ago. To Mr. Marchand is due also the impetus which has carried the whole work forward. When he foresaw that he could not finish the entire series himself he sent the best diorama artist he had, Mr. Gregory Kamka of Chicago, who has been associated with Mr. Marchand in this unique field for about eight years.
- Besides Mr. Marchand's donation, another was furnished by an alumna of the Academy through a bequest; a third by the parents of one of the present students; the rest are being financed by donations from various persons and by the College.

● The diorama is such a comparatively new medium of art expression that most people are interested in an explanation of its technique. They ask, "What is a diorama?" This type of art has become popular only in the past eight or nine years. It is a representation in three dimensions, employing painting, modeling, special lighting, and construction work,—all blended by perspective into a life-like scene. The diorama differs from the straight miniature model in that it employs a forced perspective, and is housed in a domed or sky-shaped case, which is viewed from only one side. The light is indirect, coming from the case housing the representation. So realistic is the result that one forgets that he is looking at a miniature and feels himself actually a part of the scene.

● In these twelve scenes the outstanding persons, places, and events in our history take substance. Through them, like the very soul of Saint Mary's, moves the spirit of Mother Theodore, giving life and meaning to each scene. This explains the format of the text facing each picture. Into this text are woven quotations from Mother Theodore's own words as recorded in her journals, letters, and community annals. Such seems to be the clearest interpretation one could give to each diorama, since the organizer and the artist constructed the scenes from these very quotations. All the buildings and many of the figures and landscapes have been copied faithfully from sketches and photographs which have been preserved through the years,—a pictorial inheritance which we are passing on to you.

FATHER DUJARIE
MOTHER THEODORE'S PRECURSOR,
ENVISIONS THE FUTURE

*Little Providence, the Cradle of the Present Community of The Sisters of Providence.
Countryside Near Ruillé-sur-Loire, France. 1806*

FATHER DUJARIÉ, of the parish church of Ruillé-sur-Loir, appeals to his small congregation for help in saving the faith of his children in this section so sadly ravaged by the recent Revolution of 1789. Two young girls volunteer, the one to assemble the children and teach them their three R's and their Religion, the other to visit the sick poor in their homes. This zealous pastor, with his own hands, builds a small house for them, aided only by his "Catechism" class of town boys and girls who gather the stones from fields and woods and heap them in piles along the road, and one farmer who collects and transports the stones, and helps to build the walls.

● The two girls, housed and happy in their charitable work, attract others, like them pious and zealous. The idea grows of forming the little group into a Religious Community; they are sent to an established community to learn the Religious life, receive a Religious habit, and return under the name Sisters of Providence given them by their founder who calls their house "Petite Providence" since it has been, he says, a providence to the country side. Father Dujarié stands in the foreground, peering into the heavens as though envisioning the future expansion of the Sisters of Providence.



THE CRADLE OF THE
YOUNG COMMUNITY WHICH NURTURED
MOTHER THEODORE

THE second diorama shows the origin of the Present Reunion Prayer, which links the names of Mother du Roscoät and Father Dujarié with the development of the infant community.

● This community consisted of a few Sisters who had a novitiate, a costume, and for rule, some advice from M. Dujarié, but no vows, no chapel. The latter came in 1811, measuring twenty feet by eleven feet; its walls, washed with lime, had for sole ornament, represented in low relief above the altar, the Birth of the Savior, recalling to the community the patronage of the Holy Family. In 1818, there were only 18 members; Father Dujarié was worried.

● Then he heard of a noble and generous soul for whom God reserved, he believed, a considerable role in the congregation, that of foundress. Nourishing in her heart the thought of founding a congregation for hospital work and teaching, the Countess du Roscoät,—Mlle. Josephine Zoë,—prepared herself for her chosen mission by the exercise of tender charity. The poor blessed her and the sick said, "She is so holy that she will cure us." She wrote immediately to Father Dujarié, who accepted her, in 1818. From castle to garret! . . . But Mlle. Zoë began her postulancy with fervor.

● In 1820, Mlle. du Roscoät received the religious habit and the name Sister Marie Madeleine. Shortly after she became the first Superior-general.

● Father Dujarié was happy, but a little anxious. The house was far too small for the growing community which now numbered over thirty professed. He gives his own patrimony and work is begun on a large house on the edge of town.

● On Easter Tuesday, Mother Marie Madeleine had to return to the castle du Roscoät on business. The separation was to be short but to sweeten it, it was agreed that Mother and daughters would recite six times a day the short prayer to the Sacred Heart which the saintly founder composed for them. It is still faithfully recited as the REUNION PRAYER.



MOTHER THEODORE
WEIGHING THE GREAT SACRIFICE TO BE CONSUMMATED
A YEAR HENCE

FROM "Little Providence" has grown "Grand Providence," as depicted in the third diorama. This new motherhouse of the Sisters is located on the edge of the town of Ruillé in France. The time is the close of the annual retreat in August, 1839, during which volunteers were asked for the new mission in far-off Indiana. Mother Theodore has consented to go the following year. Here she stands, facing the motherhouse and weighing her future sacrifice. Mother Mary, the Superior-general, and Bishop Bouvier are watching her sympathetically.

● The following quotations from Mother Theodore's journal of travel record her emotions when the great separation was actually taking place. They suggest what is now being suffered in anticipation.

● "The moment of separation and of death had come at last. We had to leave all. After having made the most painful sacrifices, which had cost our hearts so much, we had to break the last ties by tearing ourselves away from our dear "Providence" of Ruillé, that home so tenderly loved by all Sisters of Providence."

● "O my dear friends! O my country! How much it costs to give you up."

● "It seemed as if my soul were being torn from my body."



MOTHER THEODORE
AND SISTER COMPANIONS HAVE FIRST GLIMPSE OF AMERICA
FROM THE DECK OF THE CINCINNATI

IT would be difficult to describe what passed in my soul when I felt the vessel beginning to move, and I realized that I was no longer in France. . . . Finally we left the harbor. . . . It too disappeared, for we were already on the ocean.

● We watched the sails being unfurled one after the other; we saw them swelled by the wind, hurrying us away from our beloved France. . . . Sad, and leaning against the cordage, I was contemplating the shore of my country, which was flying away with inconceivable rapidity, and becoming smaller and smaller at every moment. . . . We neither saw nor heard anything. We again offered up to Heaven the sacrifice of all that we loved."

● The Sisters left Ruillé for America July 12, 1840, and embarked from Havre July 16, on the CINCINNATI, a sailing vessel bound for New York. The voyage was rough, the Sisters were ill most of the time, yet Mother Theodore, in her diary, leaves interesting and vivid comments on all that she sees.

● "At dawn the next day the first sight that met our eyes was land! . . . Having said our prayers with the greatest union of spirit, we went on deck and saw, quite distinctly, the land toward which we had been sailing for forty days. . . . At five o'clock we were at anchor. (Friday, Septembr 4) . . . Before knowing it we were at the dock. The boat entered under a sort of porch built out over the water and stopped at the foot of a stairway, where we got out. The sea was no longer beneath our feet, we were on the soil of America."



MOTHER THEODORE
LEADS HER MISSION BAND THROUGH THE DENSE WOODS
TO THE FEET OF THE MASTER

*Journey's End! Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, October 22, 1840. The First
Chapel of the Sisters of Providence In America*

I CANNOT tell you what passed within me during the next half-hour. I do not know myself, but I was so deeply moved that I could not utter a word. We continued to advance into the thick woods till suddenly Father Buteux stopped the carriage and said, 'Come down, Sisters, we have arrived!' What was our astonishment to find ourselves still in the midst of the forest, no village, not even a house in sight. Our guide (Father Buteux) having given orders to the driver, led us down into a ravine, whence we beheld through the trees on the other side a frame house with a stable and some sheds. 'There,' he said, 'is the house where the postulants have a room and where you will lodge until your house is ready'."

● "We had agreed among ourselves that our first visit would be made to the Blessed Sacrament, and that we would not speak to anyone before having satisfied this longing of our hearts. The priest preceded us and we followed in silence to the church. The Church! I send you the picture. Yes, . . . that is the dwelling of the God of the Universe, in comparison with which the stables wherein you shelter your cattle are palaces! . . ."

● "This then, is the Church of this place, which is also our chapel. It serves, moreover, as the dwelling of the priest, and still it is only about 13 feet wide and 15 feet long. I have just measured it."

● The priest who stands aside for the Sisters to enter is Father Buteux, pastor of the parish of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and chaplain of the young Community of Sisters. The Sister who has already entered is Mother Theodore; Sister Olympiade directs the driver in placing the baggage; Sister Mary Xavier, with eyes and clasped hands raised in thanksgiving, stands to one side; Sister Basilide, ill and overcome with the desolation of the scene, is comforted by kind Sister Mary Liguori; Sister St. Vincent calmly follows Mother Theodore into the Chapel.



MOTHER THEODORE
ENCOURAGES HER DAUGHTERS DURING THE
FIRST HARD WINTER

*The Thralls' House Becomes the "First Providence" At St. Mary-of-the-Woods.
Winter of 1840-1841*

THERE," he said, "is the house where the postulants have a room, and where you will lodge until your house is ready."

● "We went to embrace the postulants who were awaiting us. They led us to a small room which had been given up to them by the good farmer, Joseph Thralls. This room serves as bakery, refectory, recreation room. It is also an infirmary and this is the only use it serves constantly. We have also a part of the garret, where they had put eight ticks, filled with straw, on the floor. . . . This strange dormitory is directly under the roof which is made of shingles badly joined, thus letting in the wind and rain, and making it very cold. . . . We were obliged to bring dear Sister Basilide down to our room, for she is still quite ill. . . . It was, then, in this poor room that we were installed, and here we continue to live in the midst of the forest, far from the habitations of men"

● "In this country, hearts are as cold as the winters."

● "It is excessively cold; everything is frozen, even the bread."

● "The extreme cold weather has not yet begun. Our beds are still in the little garret but the snow no longer comes through for the holes are closed."

● The house, begun by the Bishop for the Sisters, was not ready, hence the hospitality of Mr. Thralls, whose house stood near the little log church. The room first occupied by the Sisters looked out through the window just above the woodbox. Through another window Mother Theodore can be seen in converse with another Sister. Sisters are seen outside gathering and chopping wood, carrying water, and clearing paths through the snow.



MOTHER THEODORE
AS PIONEER EDUCATOR, SPONSORS A
PATRIOTIC CELEBRATION

The First Institute (or Academy), July 4, 1843

THE day after our arrival we went to look at our new house, now building. Like the castles of the knights of old you cannot see it until you come up to it. Do not think, however, that it is built on the model of Father Buteux's. No indeed. It is a pretty two-story brick house, fifty feet wide by twenty-four feet deep. There are five large openings in front. The first stone was laid August seventeenth and it is already roofed. Today they began plastering but there are yet neither doors nor windows; all is being done little by little."

- In less than three years the school is fairly well established, justifying Mother Theodore's decision to make a boarding school of the lovely little house that the Bishop had intended as the Sisters' own convent.

- School is still in session, even in July, so the students entertain with an all-day celebration including patriotic toasts at a dinner under the trees, and speeches by the "young ladies" on the front steps of the Academy. Father Corbe, in the foreground, greets an old friend and his daughter.

- The Terre Haute paper of about this date describes the scene as pictured here.



MOTHER THEODORE
VINDICATES THE RIGHT OF THE SISTERS TO LIVE THEIR RULE
AT ST. MARY-OF-THE-WOODS

The First Providence. June, 1847

IN the Spring of 1841, the Sisters began immediately to enlarge the farmhouse-convent, so by 1847 the First Providence was this building.

● "For garden and yards we have all the woods, and the wilderness is our only cloister, for our home is planted therein as though it were an oak tree."

● Prospering though the Sisters were, they had been suffering a succession of grievous misunderstandings almost from the beginning, and this from the good Bishop who had brought them here. His superhuman labors and anxieties were breaking his health of mind and body. Mother Theodore, though he revered her, was the special object of his irritation. Finally he deposed her and dismissed her from his diocese! A severe illness followed, further preventing the already forbidden return to her loved St. Mary's. Even before her recovery, word came to Vincennes that the Holy Father had accepted the poor Bishop's resignation. This is her vindication; she may return as Mother to St. Mary's and continue to guide her Community according to the Rule they brought with them from France. Father Lalumière of Terre Haute arranges this triumphant procession for her return.

● ". . . We must stay calmly by the cross of Jesus and await in peace the end of our long agony."

● "I considered I should yield to the order of the Superior who recalled me to St. Mary's. I returned as soon as I was able to travel."



MOTHER THEODORE
STIMULATES EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT ST. MARY'S
BY CONFERRING AWARDS

The Second Institute (or Academy). Distribution of Prizes, July, 1848

THE time had come when we must either build or send away our pupils. The bricks destined for the construction were deteriorating day by day."

● "It was not possible to defer any longer the enlarging of the Academy. The builders have been working at it for ten days. His Lordship advanced the money—\$600 received from the Propagation of the Faith for us last year. The whole will cost from \$5000 to \$6000. Should His Lordship not require anything else from us, I believe we could raise that amount in the course of the coming year, if God continues to bless our Institution. We have now forty-six pupils. Although all do not pay, we were able to put aside something last year. This Academy is our only source of income to keep up the priest's house, the novitiate, some of the establishments, five orphans, and the Academy itself. . . . We have to look out rather closely in order not to contract debts."

● Feb., 1847. "The wings to the Academy are finished. Let us hope Providence will help us to pay for it." (S. St. Francis.)

● "Our boarding school is succeeding very well. On July thirty-first we had the commencement exercises under the forest trees. The pupils acted little plays, and several of them wore Breton costumes. The children were examined and acquitted themselves well. Then came the distribution of prizes, which Mother Theodore presented. When the crown for excellence of deportment was awarded to Mary G——, one of our little Catholic girls, her poor mother was almost choked with tears, as Mother placed on her child's head the pretty crown which I myself had the pleasure of making. Despite her crown, her reward of merit, and her gilded books for first prize in her class, our poor Lucy left Saint Mary-of-the-Woods with a very heavy heart. Since she asked permission to be baptized, her father is in a state of desperation."



MOTHER THEODORE'S STURDY HOME
FOR HER DAUGHTERS LOOKS DOWN ON THE ST. ANNE
PROCESSION WHICH SHE ESTABLISHED

Second Providence. July 25, 1875

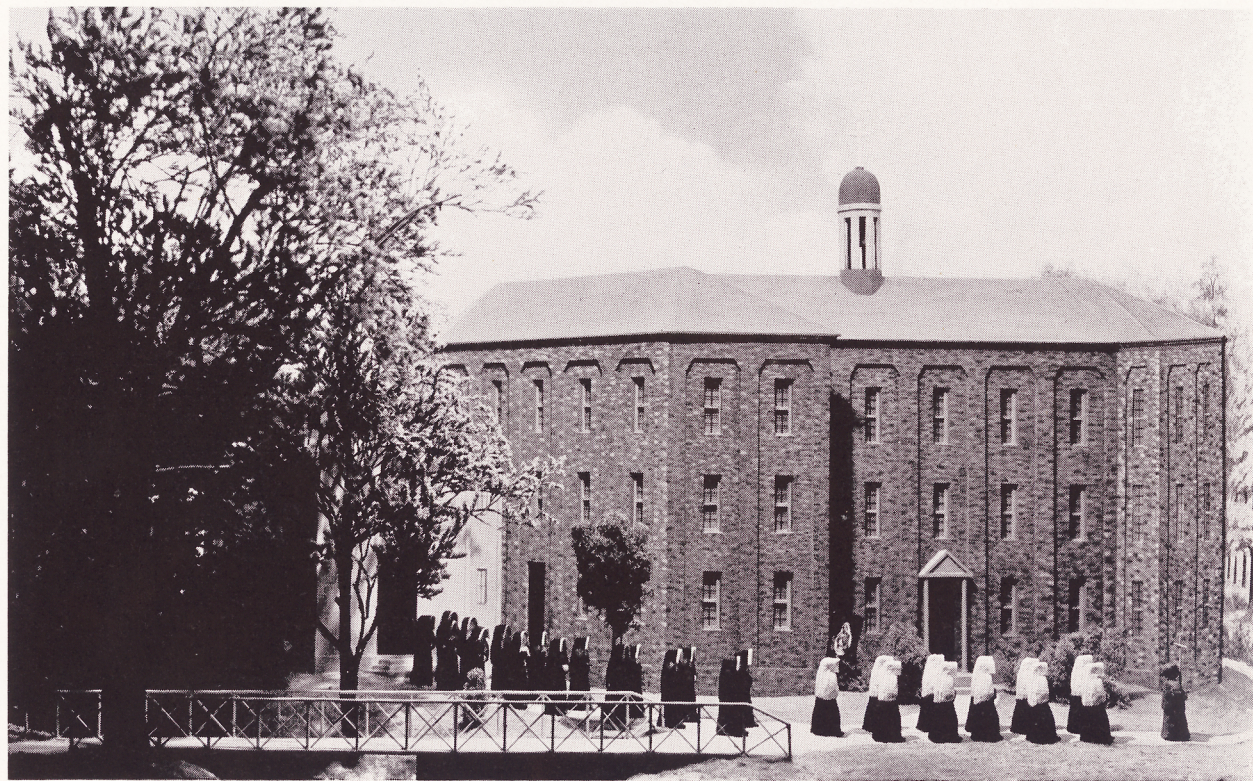
THE first solemn procession in honor of St. Anne. Every year, on the eve of her feast this procession has been held, since Mother Theodore's promise to St. Anne, when in danger of shipwreck.

● "O Saint Anne, have pity on us"!

● "I felt great confidence in my heart for we had just promised a Mass in honor of Saint Anne and an inscription on the walls of the chapel testifying that the *Nashville* had been saved by St. Anne."

● The first Motherhouse, or "Providence," was replaced in 1853 by this substantial house. It was built by Mother Theodore on the site of our present Providence.

● "By the help of God and the union that reigns among you, a house is here to receive you . . . You will love it for it is the fruit of your labors and privations. How true it is that charity edifieth. When we compare the little frame house in which we were received in charity twelve years ago with the splendid building erected here now, we clearly see the effect of those powerful words, 'Increase and multiply.' Indeed, my Sisters, we have increased and multiplied. Our exterior improvements are astonishing; but does our interior advancement correspond with the exterior?"



HAIL CROSSES! THE SPIRIT OF MOTHER THEODORE
LIVES ON IN THE COURAGE AND CHARITY OF HER DAUGHTERS
IN THE MIDST OF DISASTER

Ruins of Providence, February 7, 1889

SHORTLY after nine o'clock in the morning fire broke out in the frame building just north and east of Providence. Despite efforts to save it, flames spread quickly through the brick walls of Providence to the frame chapel on the west. All day and the following night the embers had to be watched, so we see in the rear of the building, but foreground of the picture, the watchers near their bonfire, receiving a hot drink.

●Through the ruins are seen in the east the "men's house"; on the west, the chaplain's residence. As "the quiet stars look down," we recognize the constellations of a February sky.



ANOTHER DREAM OF MOTHER THEODORE
IS REALIZED—WORKMEN PLACE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRESENT
CHAPEL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

LONG ago Mother Theodore said. "... That is the dwelling of the God of the Universe. There it is that every day the Lamb of God is offered up, a sacrifice for the living and the dead."

● "We have the consolation now of seeing Our Lord more suitably cared for in our Chapel, which is pretty well-ornamented for our Woods. The Chapel does not give me scruples as the rest does."

● In the spring of 1886 the ravine was drained and the waters of its stream were dammed into a lake by a wall whose top is still a road through the north grounds. That part of the ravine near the little old Chapel was filled in so the Church might span the ravine. This scene takes us back nearly three years before the fire, so as to show relative sizes and locations. Behind Providence is the first brick Novitiate building, and north of that is the old bakehouse. The former was moved west into a north-and-south line with the bakehouse, so as to form with it the old infirmary. This part was torn down within the last twenty-five years to be replaced by the present infirmary. A new brick Novitiate stands on the site of the first one.

● In the foreground, Mother Euphrasie and her assistant, Sister Mary Cleophas, discuss the plans with the architect.



